MARVEL
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
EXCALIBUR
$1.25 US
$1.75 CAN
36
UK 60p
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
FEATURING:
PHOENIX
VS.
DARK PHOENIX!

MARVEL® COMICS PRESENTS™

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Stan Lee Presents: EXCALIBUR "HAVING A WILD WEEKEND" 1

WRITER — Michael Higgins
PENCILER — Erik Larsen
INKER — Terry Austin
LETTERER — Tim Harkins
COLORIST — Tom Vincent

"KEEP THE FIRE BURNING" — PART 6 OF 8

Have you ever found yourself alone with nothing to do? Next time, count your blessings. You might just be better off that way. **Rachel Summers** certainly was, because now it's **Phoenix vs. Phoenix**.

The fireworks have just begun!

BLACK PANTHER "PANTHER'S QUEST" 9

WRITER — Don McGregor
PENCILER — Gene Colan
INKER — Tom Palmer
LETTERER — Joe Rosen
COLORIST — Mike Rockwitz

"OPPONENTS" — PART 24 OF 25

The Black Panther is pursued by mercenaries and Doberman pinschers through the wooded grounds of Anton Pretoriuss' estate. He has nearly eluded them when he steps into a vicious bear trap. Now, the great cat is at their mercy!

HELLCAT 25

WRITER — Jack C. Harris
PENCILER — June Brigman
INKER — Roy Richardson
LETTERER — Jim Massara
COLORIST — Nel Yomtov

"ENCOUNTER IN THE ALLEY OF DEATH"

For the past months, Patsy Walker has maintained a low profile in the city. Nevertheless, she is always ready to strike if the powers of Hellcat are needed. Now, under the shroud of darkness, she uncovers the first terrible trace of a conspiracy that threatens the lives of thousands . . .

MARVEL® COMICS PRESENTS™ Vol. 1, No. 36, December, 1989. Published by MARVEL COMICS, James E. Galton, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. **Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.** Published biweekly.
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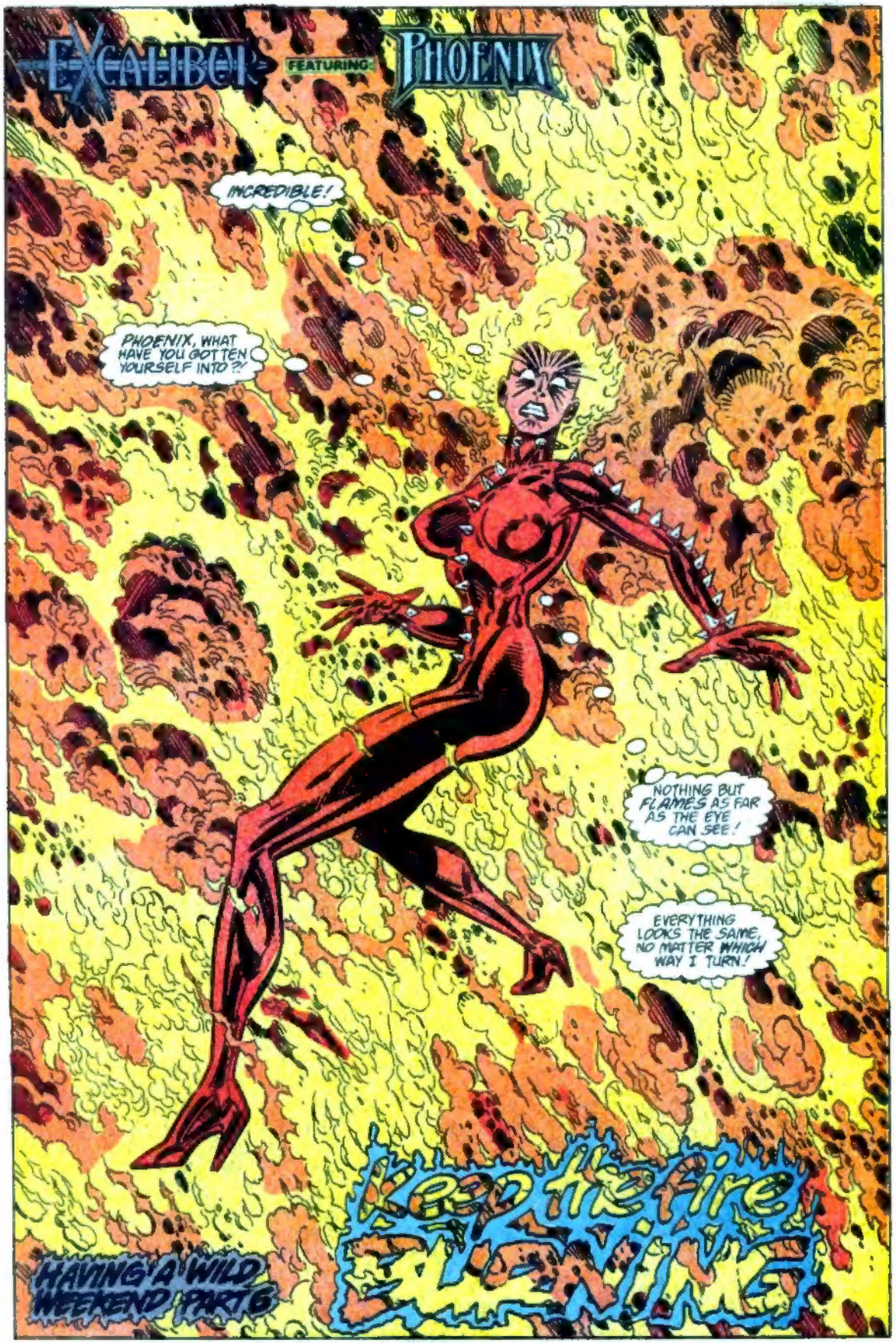
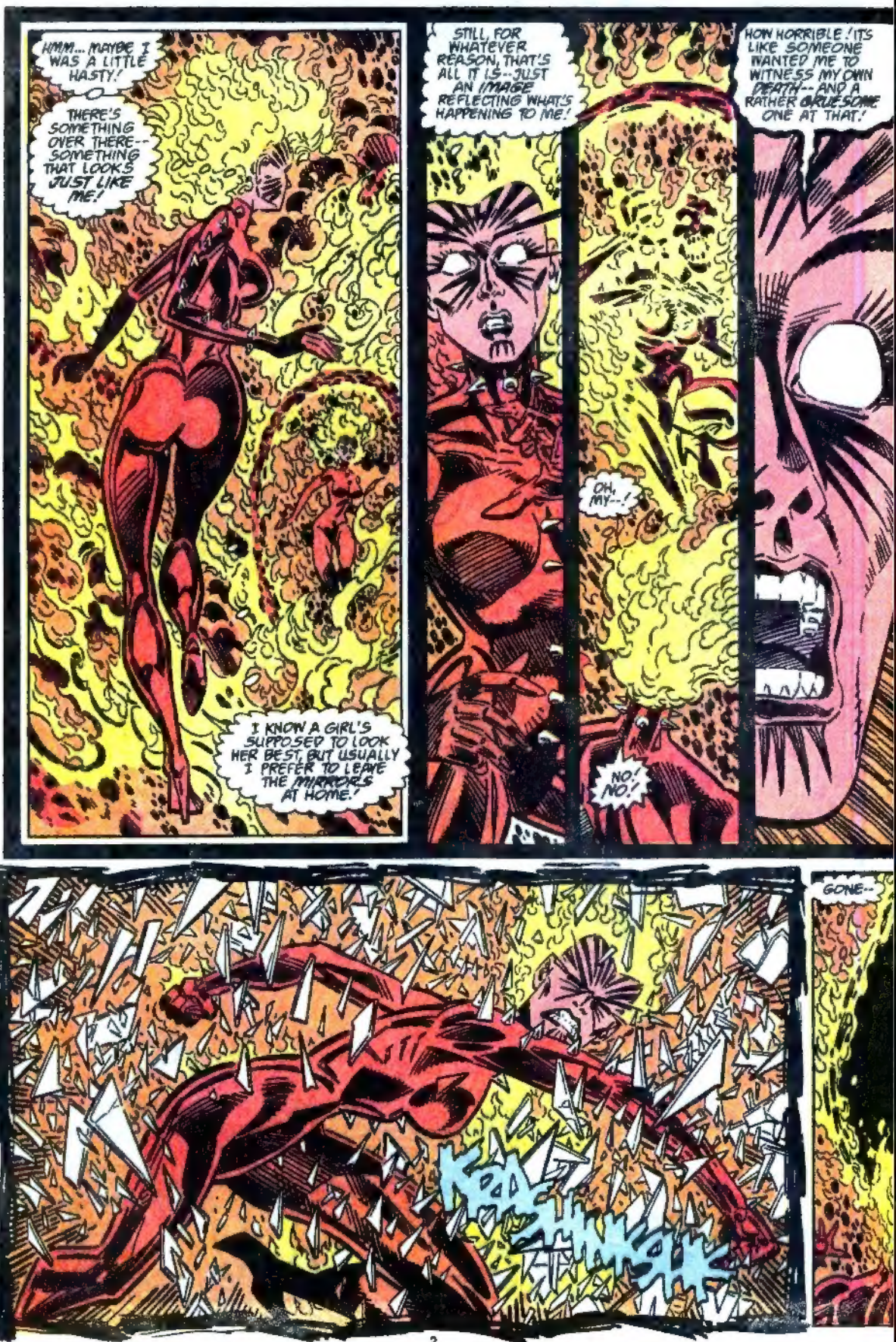
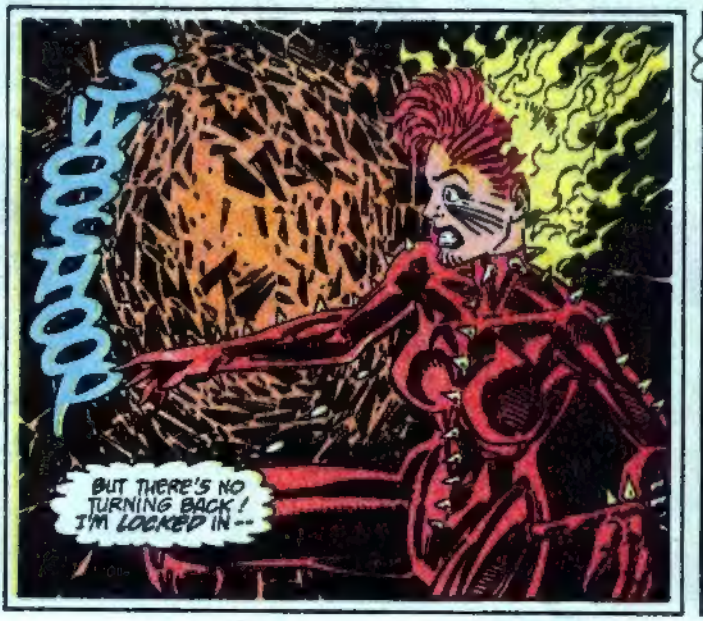

EXCALIBUR
FEATURING:
PHOENIX
INCREDIBLE!
PHOENIX, WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO?!
NOTHING BUT FLAMES AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE!
EVERYTHING LOOKS THE SAME, NO MATTER WHICH WAY I TURN!
Keep the Fire Burning
HAVING A WILD WEEKEND PART 6

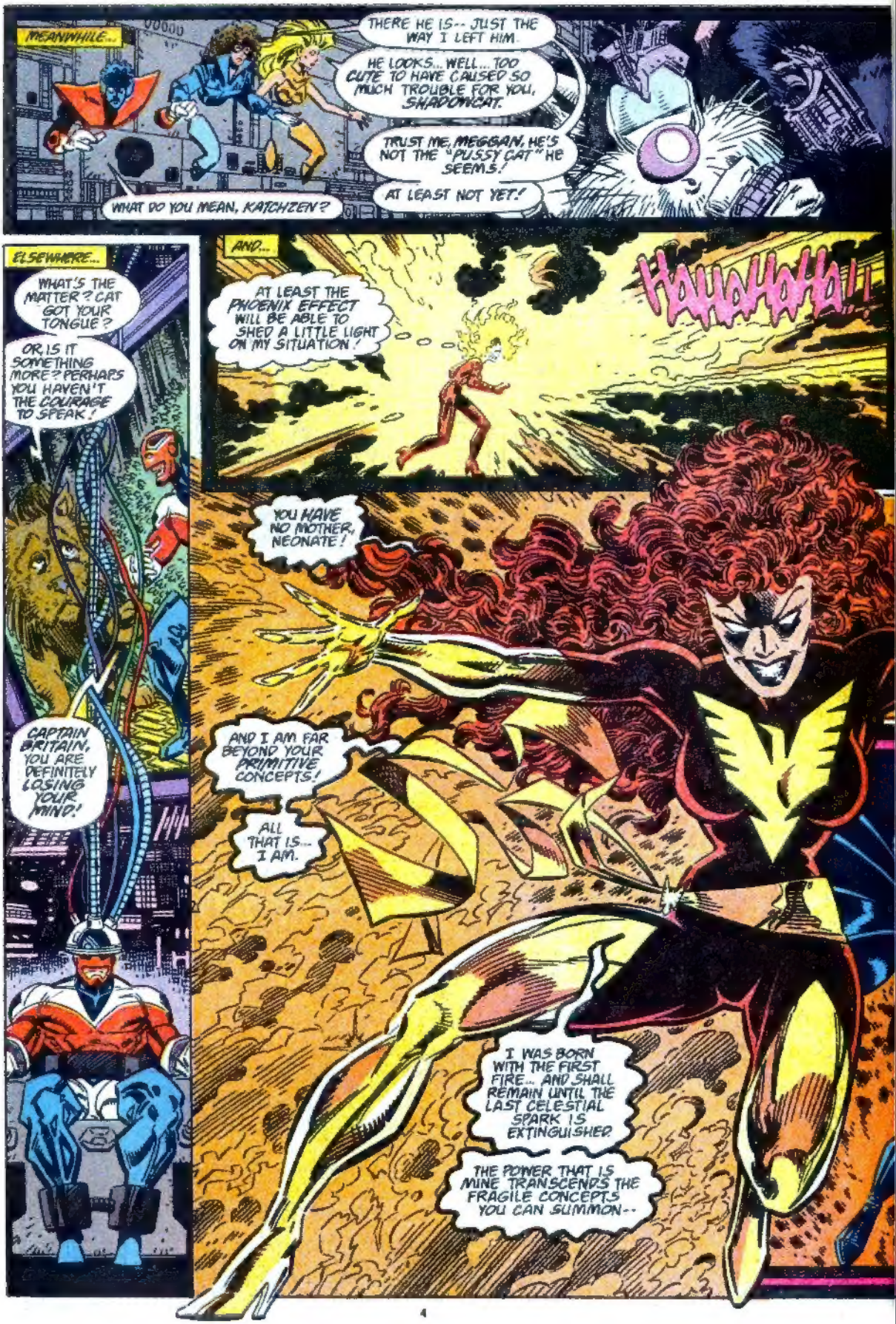

HMM... MAYBE I WAS A LITTLE HASTY!
THERE'S SOMETHING OVER THERE-- SOMETHING THAT LOOKS JUST LIKE ME!
I KNOW A GIRL'S SUPPOSED TO LOOK HER BEST, BUT USUALLY I PREFER TO LEAVE THE MIRRORS AT HOME!
STILL FOR WHATEVER REASON, THAT'S ALL IT IS--JUST AN IMAGE REFLECTING WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME!
OH, MY--!
NO! NO!
HOW HORRIBLE! ITS LIKE SOMEONE WANTED ME TO WITNESS MY OWN DEATH-- AND A RATHER GRUESOME ONE AT THAT!
KRA-THUNK-KA-THUNK
GONE--

AND WHY SHOULDN'T YOU DIE IN SUCH A TERRIBLE FASHION, RACHEL?
IS IT ANY LESS THAN YOU DESERVE?
KATE?!
IMPOSSIBLE! THAT'S THE WAY KITTY PRYDE WILL LOOK IN THE FUTURE--THE WORLD THAT I COME FROM!
SHOULD YOU SUFFER ANY LESS THAN I DID--
--WHEN YOU LEFT ME TO BE SLAUGHTERED, FLEEING INTO THE PAST, SEEKING SAFETY ONLY FOR YOURSELF?
NO! YOU'RE LYING!
THAT'S NOT HOW IT HAPPENED!
THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED AT ALL!

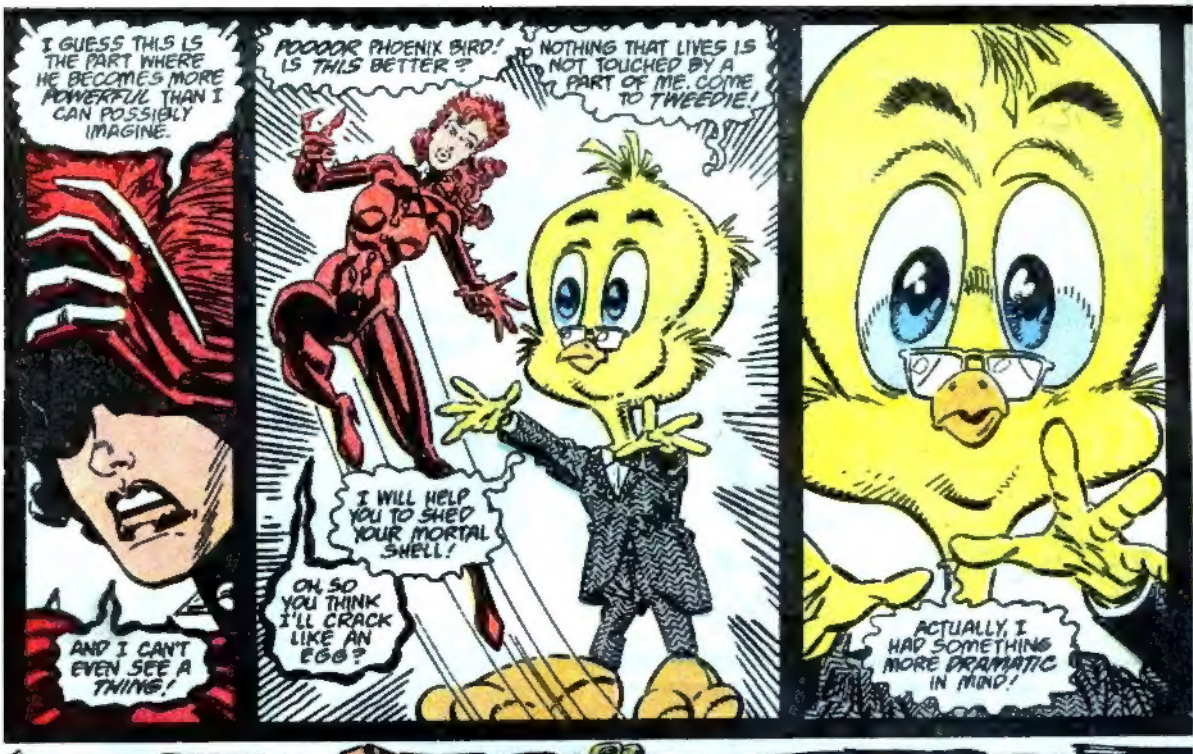
--ALONG WITH HER WRETCHED LIES!
HOW DARE THEY DEFILE KATE'S MEMORY LIKE THAT? WHAT SORT OF TWISTED CREATURE COULD EVEN CONCEIVE OF SUCH A GRUEL DECEPTION?!
WELL, AT LEAST THERE'S A WAY OUT OF HERE NOW!


SHOOOOP
BUT THERE'S NO TURNING BACK! I'M LOCKED IN--

--IN COMPLETE DARKNESS!


MEANWHILE...
THERE HE IS-- JUST THE WAY I LEFT HIM.
HE LOOKS... WELL... TOO CUTE TO HAVE CAUSED SO MUCH TROUBLE FOR YOU, SHADOWCAT.
TRUST ME, MEGGAN, HE'S NOT THE "PUSSY CAT" HE SEEMS!
AT LEAST NOT YET!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, KATCHZEN?
ELSEWHERE...
WHAT'S THE MATTER? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?
OR, IS IT SOMETHING MORE? PERHAPS YOU HAVEN'T THE COURAGE TO SPEAK!
CAPTAIN BRITAIN, YOU ARE DEFINITELY LOSING YOUR MIND!
AND...
AT LEAST THE PHOENIX EFFECT WILL BE ABLE TO SHED A LITTLE LIGHT ON MY SITUATION!
HAHAHAHA!!
YOU HAVE NO MOTHER, NEONATE!
AND I AM FAR BEYOND YOUR PRIMITIVE CONCEPTS!
ALL THAT IS... I AM.
I WAS BORN WITH THE FIRST FIRE... AND SHALL REMAIN UNTIL THE LAST CELESTIAL SPARK IS EXTINGUISHED.
THE POWER THAT IS MINE TRANSCENDS THE FRAGILE CONCEPTS YOU CAN SUMMON--

SIMPLE, NIGHTCRAWLER. I'M GOING TO PROGRAM A NEW PERSONALITY FOR HIM AND PUT HIM TO WORK FOR U.S.!
DESPITE THE FACT THAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE SOME OF OUR OTHER TEAM MEMBERS, I HAVEN'T BEEN PHYSICALLY ABLE TO BREAK THROUGH TO WHEREVER THEY ARE.
I THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET AROUND THAT IF I USE SOME OF THE CONSTRUCTS THAT BELONG TO THIS MAD, MAD WORLD!
FOOLISH CHILD!
M-MOTHER?!
--FOR I KNOW THE DARK SIDE AS WELL AS THE LIGHT.
YOUR POWERS ARE WEAK, OLD MAN.
HEY, I'M NO OLD MAN! BESIDES, THAT'S THE WRONG CHARACTER!
BUT, AS NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION, LET'S SEE WHAT THIS LIGHT-SABER CAN DO!
EXCEPT, THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN NEXT!
JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIE!


I GUESS THIS IS THE PART WHERE HE BECOMES MORE POWERFUL THAN I CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE.
AND I CAN'T EVEN SEE A THING!
POOOOR PHOENIX BIRD! IS THIS BETTER?
NOTHING THAT LIVES IS NOT TOUCHED BY A PART OF ME. COME TO TWEEDIE!
I WILL HELP YOU TO SHED YOUR MORTAL SHELL!
OH, SO YOU THINK I'LL CRACK LIKE AN EGG?
ACTUALLY, I HAD SOMETHING MORE DRAMATIC IN MIND!

HOHAHAHA!
HUNH?!
CAN YOU GUETH WHAT I DETHIRE, BIRD-BRAIN?
K'SMACK!

DEATH IS THE CERTAINTY-- THE END TO ALL BURDENS, ALL RESPONSIBILITIES-- LIFE THE GREATEST OF UNKNOWNS.
EACH DAY, EVERY MOMENT, CONTAINS RISK, SAFETY--AND PERHAPS PEACE-- CAN BE FOUND ONLY IN THE GRAVE.
I MAY BE SALVATION OR DAMNATION.
CAN YOU GUESS WHICH NOW IS MY HEART'S DESIRE?
I'VE GOT A FEELING THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE PRETTY!
LET'S GET OFF THIS FUR-BALL!
HAVE YOU SOMETHING AGAINST FUR?
SORRY, IT SLIPPED!
OH... YUCK!
CHOMP
WELL, I GUESS THAT TAKES CARE OF YOUR LITTLE PROBLEM, RACHEL...
...I THINK!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WELL, I'VE CERTAINLY FELT BETTER.
YEAH. YOU'VE LOOKED BETTER, TOO!

->AGGHK!<-
->BAARTH!<-
SNAPP
KRACKLE
POPP
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
WHATEVER IT IS, I DON'T THINK WE WANT TO BE A PART OF IT!
KA BABOOM
CLASP HANDS! I'LL RAISE US OUT OF DANGER!
RACHEL! YOU LOOK WONDERFUL!
ER... I... UH... I MEAN...
I THINK SHE UNDERSTANDS, MEGGAN!
FEELING OKAY?
NEVER BETTER!
IN THAT CASE, WE HAVE WORK TO DO!
HERE'S MY PLAN!
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

PANTHER'S QUEST

The last step taken found your heel
Decidedly upon the left
One more would throw you on the right
Another still! ... you see your plight
You call this thinking, but it's walking

from Robert Frost's poem,
"To A Thinker" from The Poetry of Robert Frost,
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Publishers

STARRING: THE BLACK PANTHER
PART XXIX

OPPONENTS

HE STRANGLES THE SCREAM EXPLODING IN HIS HEAD --

-- A SHRIEK OF ANGUISH CHOKING IN HIS THROAT.

THE PAIN IS SO OVERWHELMING HE IS BLIND TO THE NIGHT.

IT TAKES VALUABLE SECONDS BEFORE HE CAN COMPREHEND WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

CAUGHT IN A CAMOUFLAGED ANIMAL TRAP.

DIRT-SMEARED METAL TEETH PUNCTURING HIS ANKLE!

IF THE SERRATED EDGES OF THE CLAMP HAVE SPLINTERED BONE, HE IS FINISHED.
SO MORE GREAT CAT LOPING WITH NATURAL GRACE AND SPEED.
ONE OF THE DOBERMAN PINSCHERS IS STILL IN PURSUIT. AT BEST, THE CREATURE IS LITTLE MORE THAN A MINUTE-AND-A-HALF BEHIND HIM. IT HAS HIS SCENT; IT'S CLOSING IN FAST.
HE TRIES TO SHUT OUT THE PRIMAL PAIN, SEE IF HE CAN ASCERTAIN THE AMOUNT OF DAMAGE.
GRRRRR
ARE THE TARSAL BONES IN THE ANKLE CRACKED?
EVEN IF HE COULD FREE HIMSELF OF THE TRAP, NO SMALL FEAT IN ITSELF --
-- IF THOSE SMALL BONES ARE SHATTERED--
--OR IF THE ACHILLES TENDON IS SEVERED--
--HE WOULD BE LUCKY TO HOBBLE PITIFULLY.
CERTAINLY, IN SUCH A CONDITION, HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO OUT-RUN THE DOBERMAN.
THE INSIDE OF HIS BOOT IS WET WITH BLOOD.

HIS HEEL SQUISHES DOWN ON A WARM, VISCOUS POOL THAT SPREADS OUT INSIDIOUSLY UNDER HIS FOOT.
HIS VISION CLEARS AND DIMS WITH EACH PAIN-PULSE.
NOW HE IS AWARE THAT THE BOOT-LEATHER HAS GIVEN HIM SOME PROTECTION FROM THE JAGGED, METALLIC, UNFORGIVING TEETH!
HOW MANY POUNDS PRESSURE ON THIS TRAP?
HOW MUCH FORCE REQUIRED TO RELEASE IT?
BETWEEN ONE OF THE PAIN-WAVELETS, THE GREAT CAT SENSES THE DOBERMAN AGAIN.
30 SECONDS HAVE PASSED!
THE CREATURE WILL REACH HIM IN APPROXIMATELY A MINUTE!
PRY YOUR FINGERS BETWEEN THE SHARP V'S OF METAL TEETH.
GET A GRIP ON THE BLOOD-SLICK CLAMPS!
HE CAN SMELL THE ANIMAL'S FRENZY NOW.
50 SECONDS AWAY AT BEST!
FINGERS PROBING BLOOD-FILLED FLESH PENETRATIONS -
--SO MEAT-PULP SOFT.
KRE-
DON'T THINK ABOUT THAT!
FINGERS SLIPPING--
SKR-ISH
--IN HIS BLOOD!

HE SOBS ONCE.
--AN INVOLUNTARY EXPRESSION OF MISERY.
NOW HE CAN HEAR THE DOBERMAN BREATHING EAGERLY.
PAWS, LIGHT TREAD ON PINE NEEDLES. 35 SECONDS LEFT MAXIMUM.
NO TIME TO FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF. LACERATED FINGERTIPS AREN'T ANY EXCUSE. THIS BEAST WILL LISTEN TO AND ACCEPT.
IT WILL HURTLE FROM THE SHADOWY DOES WITH FURIOUS SPEED--
--AND IT WILL NOT SLOW DOWN
IT WILL LEAP AT HIM WITH ALL THAT TERRIBLE POWER BEHIND IT.
THE SPRING MECHANISM OF THE TRAP RESISTS. STEEL CREASES. PAIN DRAWS BLOOD INSIDE HIS FINGERS WHERE THEY BEND AND PULL
IF YOU CAN MANAGE TO FREE THE METAL TEETH FROM RUINED FLESH THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO DO.
OH IS THAT ALL? EASIER SAID
AND HE HAD THOUGHT TIN ROOFING SLASHING UP HIS LEG HAD HURT
HE HAD THOUGHT IT COULDN'T GET WORSE THAN FIRE SEARING ACROSS HIS BACK.
HE WAS WRONG!
FINGERS SLIPPED AGAIN

NO!
IF THE TRAP IMPALES HIM ONCE MORE, THERE WILL NOT BE TIME FOR ANOTHER ESCAPE ATTEMPT.
PULL! CAN'T!
SO CLOSE TO HER! ARE YOU QUITTING WHEN YOU HAVE COME SO NEAR?
HE HAS HEARD IT CLAIMED SOME ANIMALS CHEW A LEG OFF AS A PRICE FOR FREEDOM. THE DOBERMAN WON'T STRIKE FOR THE LEG
"THE TRAP REFUSES TO YIELD. IF YOU'RE GIVING UP, ADMIT IT!
YOUR MOTHER IS WAITING "TELL HER YOU FAILED!
"COME TO SUPPER, SON. PLAY-TIME'S OVER!"
PULL FREE! THERE'S ENOUGH GIVE.
A TINY HORRIBLE SOUND AS THE METAL TEETH SCRAPE DOWN THE SIDE OF HIS BOOT.
LOST THE GRIP! DOESN'T MATTER! FURROWS GOUGED IN HIS HEEL --
SNAP
-- BUT HE IS STILL FREE!

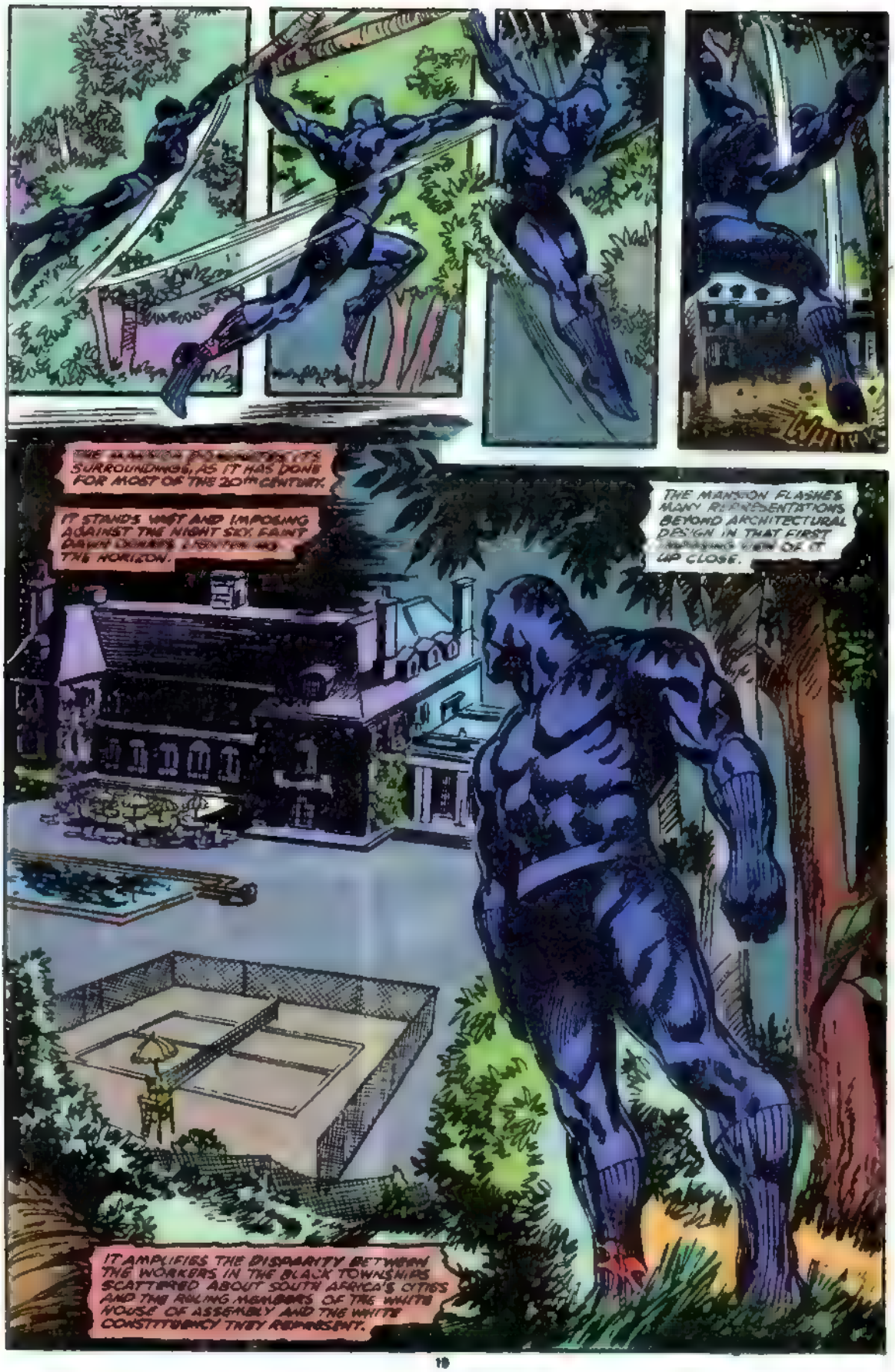
AND THEN THE CREATURE HITS HIM, SO HARD AND FIERCE AND FULL OF MURDEROUS MOVEMENT.
SINEWY MUSCLES RIPPLING LIQUIDLY UNDER TAUT LIMBS.
RRRRGGH
SLAMMING INTO THE WOODED PINE-NEEDLE CARPET.
TINY, RUST COLORED SLIVER-DAGGERS STICKING HIS BACK--
--SPLINTERS IN HIS RAW BURNS.
DON'T TRY TO STAND. CROUCH! NEED TO SEE IF THE ANKLE WILL RESPOND TO THE DEMANDS OF QUICK MANEUVERS.
RRR
RRR
THE DOBERMAN HAS BEEN TRAINED TO TEAR THE SOFT THROAT OPEN--
--RIP TRACHEA, ESOPHAGUS, AND JUGULAR VEIN TO TATTERED, USELESS RIBBONS!
IT CAN DO SO WITH ONE LUNGE!

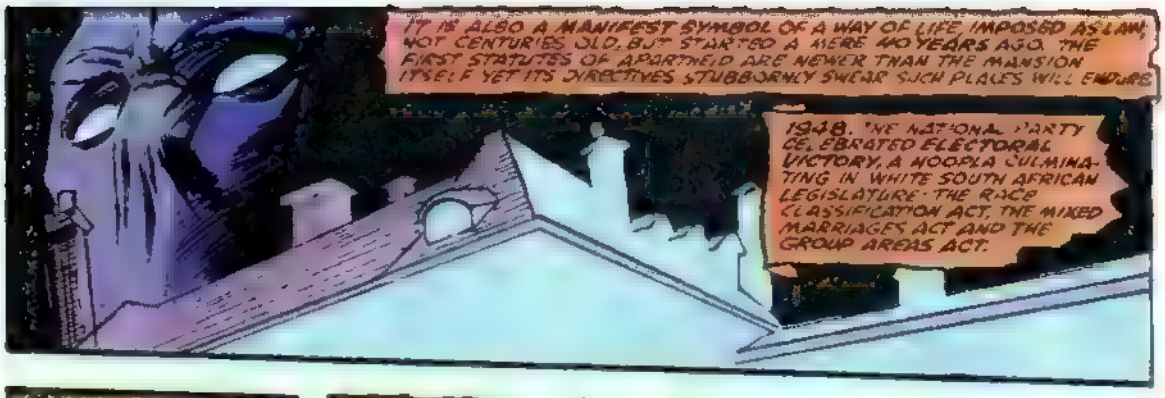
HE MOVES WITH THE GREAT CAT'S SUPERB SPEED. HIS THUMBS JAMMING UNDER SOFT FUR OF CHIN--
--HIS FINGERS PRESSING PAST RUBBERY PINK AND BLACK GUMS--
--TO SALIVA SLICK INCISORS!
LISTEN TO THAT RUCKUS! DOG'S GOT HIM SURE!
BETCHA THAT DOBE'S MAKIN' TENDER VITTLES OUTTA HIM!
ITS BREATH GUSHES OUT INTO HIS FACE. A SMELL HARSH WITH DECAY.
SOMETHING ROTTING BETWEEN THE TEETH.
MAN, I DON'T KNOW IF I WANT TO SEE WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM. WE'RE TALKING CHOPPED LIVER HERE.
YOU SEEN WORSE. YOU DONE WORSE.
YOU WAS WITH ME, YOU SHOULD KNOW.
YEAH, BUT YOU GET OFF ON ALL THAT BLOOD AND GUTS STUFF!
YOU NEVER HEARD ME SAY DIFF'RENT--GETS MY JUICES GOIN'.
UNDER THE TONGUE, HIS TORN FINGERS BATHE IN A TEPID, FROTHING POOL OF SPIT.
DRIPPING--
--AS IF IN ANTICIPATION OF THE TASTE OF HIS FLESH.
GRRRRRRRAAGHH
HE LOSES THE GREAT CAT!
LOSES THE GREAT CAT TO FEAR OF THIS BEAST WHOSE SINGULAR COMMITMENT IS HIS DEATH!
FEAR STEALS THE INSTINCT AND ABILITY OF THE GREAT CAT FROM HIM!

WITHOUT THE GREAT CAT, HE IS MERELY A MAN WHO FEELS CHEATED.
HIS FREEDOM AND SENSE OF TRIUMPH SNATCHED SO VICIOUSLY AWAY IT IS UNFAIR!
FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF, AND YOU ARE DEAD! IT ENDS HERE!
YOU WON'T EVEN KNOW WHEN GORE OR HIS MERCENARIES DISCOVER YOUR BODY.
A WHISPER OF THE GREAT CAT TRACES THROUGH HIS CRANIAL NERVES.
A SIGN OF THE GREAT CAT CARESSES HIS CEREBELLUM AND THE WHISPERS AND SIGHS DIMINISH THE FEAR.
DON'T GIVE IN TO THE FEAR, LET IT BE A PART OF YOU.
IT HAS TO BE A PART OF YOU.
FEAR CAN KEEP YOU CAUTIOUS, KEEP YOU ALERT, BUT IT MUST NOT DOMINATE AND CANCEL ACTION.
THE CALF MUSCLES PROTEST, AND HIS ANKLE SPURTS FRESH BLOOD BUT HOLDS THE WEIGHT.
--UNTIL IT IS GONE.
USE THE TRAP! GET AHOLD OF THE ANCHOR CHAIN.
NOT THAT WAY, STUPID! ANY IDIOT CAN TELL THE NOISE'S COMIN' FROM THIS DIRECTION
AIN'T WE SPEAKING POLITE. YOU AFRAID OF CENSORS OR SOMETHING. NORMALLY YOU CALL ME #?!-@
ARGH! YOU LED ME INTO THORNS!
THE TRAP IS NOT PART OF THE LAND--
--AND WON'T YIELD!

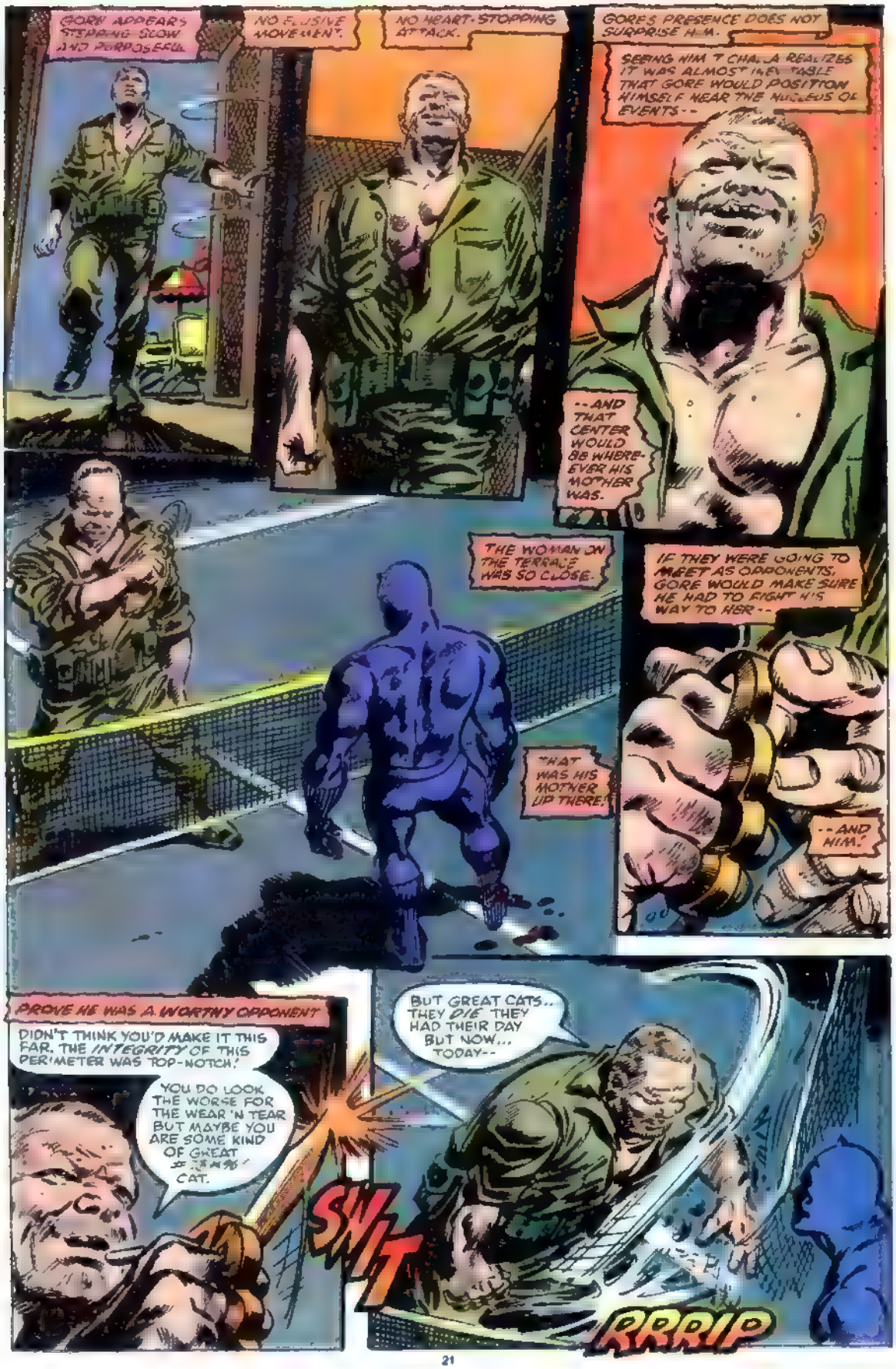
THE TRAP BASE YANKS FREE OF THE GROUND SO ABRUPTLY HIS CAT'S NATURAL BALANCE IS NEARLY LOST
A QUICK STEADYING SPREAD OF FEET TO KEEP HIMSELF ERECT
GR
RRR
HE NOTES WITH SATISFACTION, THAT THOUGH THE BLOOD IS NOW LIKE COOLING GELATIN WITHIN HIS BOOT, HIS ANKLE CAN BEAR THE STRAIN. THE BONES AND LIGAMENTS ARE INTACT!
THE GREAT CAT IS WITH HIM FULLY, RACING AS FAST AS HIS PULSE, SCREAMING THAT THE DOBERMAN HAS MADE ITS DEMONIC DEATH LEAP!
HE WHIRLS TRUSTING THE GREAT CAT'S KEEN EXACTITUDE IN SENSING ITS OPPONENT'S WHERE ABOUT AT ANY GIVEN SECOND.
SPLUTSCHH
A SECOND DOG TO DIE ON WHAT WILL MOST LIKELY BE HIS LAST NIGHT IN THIS COUNTRY.
HE DOES NOT REGRET THE DEATH OF THIS ANIMAL. IT WAS TRAINED TO KILL, AND IT WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM.
SOUNDS LIKE IT'S OVER.
'CEPT FOR THE LEFT-OVERS

YOU REALLY ARE ONE SICK MOTHER.
HIS BREATH IS STILL RAGGED IN HIS CHEST, BUT THERE ISN'T TIME TO REST--
--AND HE IS WEARILY RESENTFUL THAT ONCE AGAIN HE CANNOT EVEN SAVOR SURVIVAL.
THE TWO HUMAN OPPONENTS WILL SWEEP ASIDE THOSE
GOOD! THE ANKLE CAN ALSO WITHSTAND A LEAP, STABS WITH PAIN--MESSAGES, BUT NOT ONES THAT WILL INCAPACITATE HIM.
LOOK AT THAT! THE DOBE'S BOUGHT IT.
THAT AIN'T POSSIBLE--
-ISSS IT?
THE GREAT CAT SNATCHES THE UZI OUT OF MID-AIR AS IF IT WERE FALLING IN SLOW-MOTION.
WE'RE IN DEEP--
THUD
HE HAS NEVER USED A WEAPON TO KILL ANOTHER HUMAN BEING IN HIS LIFE. HE IS SINCERELY TEMPTED TO REJECT THAT IDEAL.
BUT A LIFE-TIME OF RESPECTING LIFE MAKES HIM TOSS ASIDE THE TEMPTING WEAPONS.


WHIIIV
THE MANSION DOMINATES ITS SURROUNDINGS, AS IT HAS DONE FOR MOST OF THE 20th CENTURY.
IT STANDS VAST AND IMPOSING AGAINST THE NIGHT SKY. FAINT DAWN LIGHTS LIGHTEN NO THE HORIZON.
THE MANSION FLASHES MANY REPRESENTATIONS BEYOND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN THAT FIRST [illegible] VIEW OF IT UP CLOSE.
IT AMPLIFIES THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE WORKERS IN THE BLACK TOWNSHIPS SCATTERED ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA'S CITIES AND THE RULING MEMBERS OF THE WHITE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND THE WHITE CONSTITUENCY THEY REPRESENT.


IT IS ALSO A MANIFEST SYMBOL OF A WAY OF LIFE IMPOSED AS LAW, NOT CENTURIES OLD, BUT STARTED A MERE 40 YEARS AGO. THE FIRST STATUTES OF APARTHEID ARE NEWER THAN THE MANSION ITSELF YET ITS DIRECTIVES STUBBORNLY SWEAR SUCH PLACES WILL ENDURE
1948. THE NATIONAL PARTY CELEBRATED ELECTORAL VICTORY, A HOOPLA CULMINATING IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATURE · THE RACE CLASSIFICATION ACT, THE MIXED MARRIAGES ACT AND THE GROUP AREAS ACT.

HARD TO BELIEVE SUCH RESTRICTION GIVEN POLITICAL LEGALITY ONLY FOUR DECADES AGO. MAY YOU STAND, MAGNIFICENT ESTATE AS TESTAMENT TO THIS ASSEMBLY'S FORESIGHT TO KEEP SUCH HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING POSSIBLE.
FOR T'CHALLA, THE MANSION REPRESENTS A PRISON--
--A PLACE WHERE HIS MOTHER MAY HAVE SOMEHOW, FOR SOME REASON HE STILL CANNOT FATHOM BEEN KEPT FROM HIM SINCE HE WAS A YOUNG CHILD
HE WILL ENTER THIS MANSION--
--SYMBOL--
--PRISON--
--AND TRY TO DISCOVER THE SECRETS ITS EXTERIOR CONCEALS
VOYEUR TO AN EMOTIONAL TABLEAU.
GET BACK INSIDE!
DO YOU WANT TO GET YOUR SELF KILLED?
AFTER ALL I HAVE BEEN THROUGH .. ALL I HAVE RISKED TO KEEP YOU-
--DO YOU THINK I WOULD TAKE THE CHANCE A STRAY BULLET MIGHT STEAL YOU FROM ME
HE'S OUT THERE
CLOSE.
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT
SLAM
A SHADOW LIKE A BARRIER
AN OPPONENT'S SHADOW

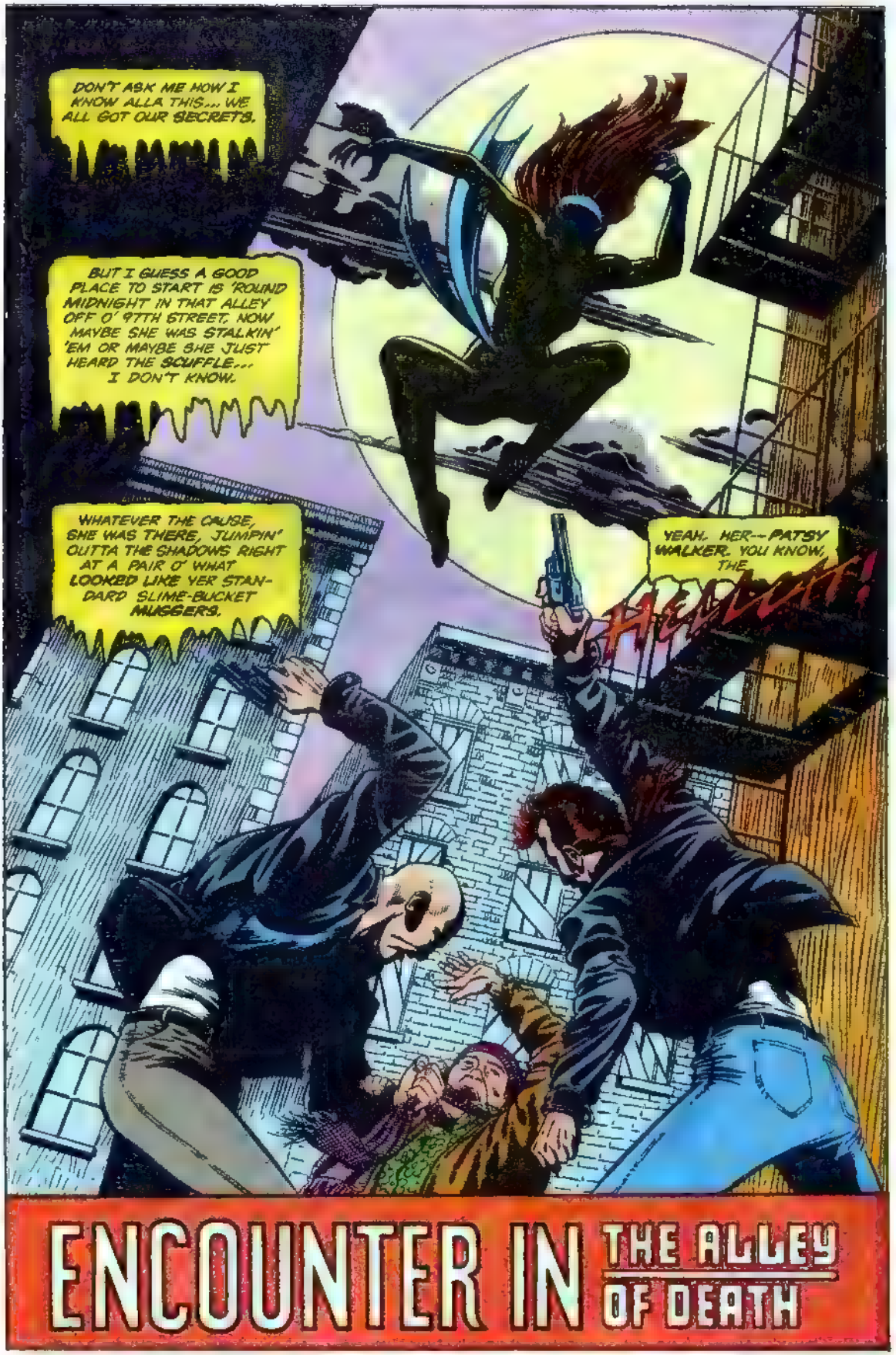

GORE APPEARS STEPPING SLOW AND PURPOSEFUL.
NO EVASIVE MOVEMENT.
NO HEART-STOPPING ATTACK.
GORE'S PRESENCE DOES NOT SURPRISE HIM.
SEEING HIM T'CHALLA REALIZES IT WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT GORE WOULD POSITION HIMSELF NEAR THE NUCLEUS OF EVENTS--
--AND THAT CENTER WOULD BE WHEREVER HIS MOTHER WAS.
THE WOMAN ON THE TERRACE WAS SO CLOSE.
IF THEY WERE GOING TO MEET AS OPPONENTS, GORE WOULD MAKE SURE HE HAD TO FIGHT HIS WAY TO HER--
THAT WAS HIS MOTHER UP THERE!
--AND HIM!
PROVE HE WAS A WORTHY OPPONENT
DIDN'T THINK YOU'D MAKE IT THIS FAR. THE INTEGRITY OF THIS PERIMETER WAS TOP-NOTCH!
YOU DO LOOK THE WORSE FOR THE WEAR 'N TEAR BUT MAYBE YOU ARE SOME KIND OF GREAT [illegible] CAT.
BUT GREAT CATS.. THEY DIE THEY HAD THEIR DAY BUT NOW... TODAY--
SNIT
RRRIP

-- TODAY THEY'RE ALMOST EXTINCT. WIPED OUT. EXTERMINATED.
BLOWN TO ROTTING GUTS.
BUT #@*%. YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNEW THAT.
YOU CAN'T STOP ME.
OF COURSE, YOU KNOW...
THIS MEANS WAR!
THUD
IT MEANS...
I AM GOING TO SEE MY MOTHER!
SLICE
GUY WHO DOESN'T EVEN RECOGNIZE OR LAUGH AT A GOOD DAFFY DUCK IMPRESSION--
--DESERVES TO BECOME SPARE BODY PARTS.
PERSONALLY YOU WANT THE TRUTH, I DO A BETTER ELMER FUDD--
--BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU AIN'T GONNA BE ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR IT.
RIP

THE 3½ INCH STAINLESS STEEL BLADE THRUSTS AT THE PANTHER'S HEART. THE COUP DE MAIN.
THE BLADE SLICES ONLY EMPTY AIR. THE COUP DE MAIN.'
TRUSSH
YOU SPEAK NONSENSE PATTER, GORE. WORDS TO AMUSE YOURSELF THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS TIME AND PLACE.
BUT THEN, THE STRUGGLE FOR A SHARING OF POWER AND EQUALITY... AND AN END TO SANCTIONED PERSECUTION... NONE OF THAT HAS EVER MEANT ANYTHING TO YOU!
YOU USE THE SITUATION TO SATISFY YOUR TALENT FOR KILLING.
GORE IS UNSETTLINGLY AGILE FOR A MAN HIS SIZE. USES HIS HEAVIER WEIGHT TO MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE.
THE INTERLOCKED BODIES CHANGE POSITION, AND THE GREAT CAT IS PINNED. THE SHARP TIP OF THE BLADE SO CLOSE TO THE PUPIL OF THE PANTHER'S EYES THAT IT BLURS.
ANOTHER SECOND, IT WILL RIP THE LIGHT OUT OF THE EYE...
THAT'SSS THE THANKSSS I GET!
--PERMANENTLY!

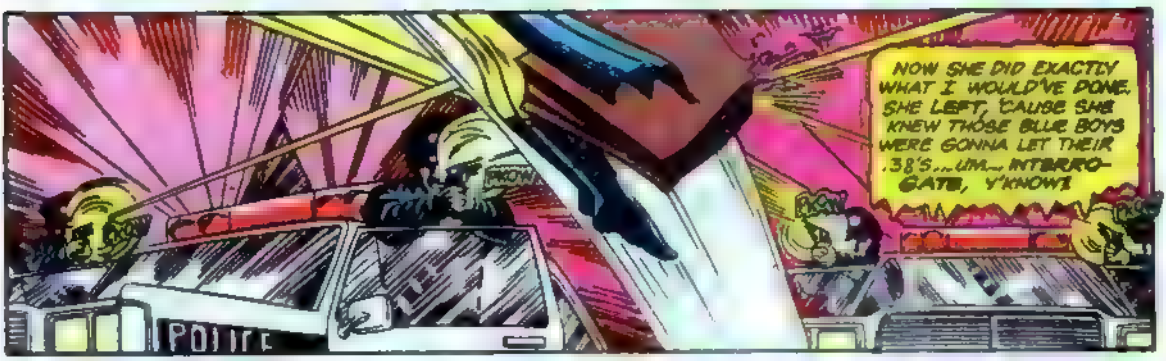
HE FORCES HIS HEAD TO THE SIDE!
COWL AND FLESH SHRED AS ONE WITH EQUAL EASE.
CHINNGG
ZANTI WOULD SCOLD HIM.
SNAK
♫ I ALMOST KILLED THE WABBIT ♫
♫ I KILLED THE WAAABBIT! ♫
BLOOD SMEARS THE CORNER OF HIS EYE.
IT IS LIKE VIEWING THE WORLD THROUGH REDDISH FILM, EVERY FIGURE AND OBJECT BLOOD-SHADED.
♫ NOW, I WILL KILL THE WAAABBIT! ♫
WHAT IS HE HEARING? GORE SINGING SOME WAGNERIAN OPERA WITH NONSENSE LYRICS, IN A SURPRISINGLY STRONG AND STIRRING VOICE?
♫ IT'S ALL OVER FOR THE WAAABBIT ♫
T'CHALLA CATCHES THE WORD "KILL" BUT WHAT IS GORE SINGING HE IS GOING TO KILL?
SOMETHING HE CAN'T UNDERSTAND, BUT GORE IS DEFINITELY NOT CLAIMING A PANTHER OR GREAT CAT.
DRRROWN THE WABBIT
SPLASH
AND WHAT HAS POSSESSED HIM TO SING?
THE WATER FLOODS THROUGH HIS COWL, AND THE FABRIC HOLDS IT TO HIS MOUTH AND NOSTRILS--
--LIKE A WET LOVER WITH LETHAL CARESSES.
SMOTHERING!

Concludes Next Issue...


DON'T ASK ME HOW I KNOW ALLA THIS... WE ALL GOT OUR SECRETS.
BUT I GUESS A GOOD PLACE TO START IS 'ROUND MIDNIGHT IN THAT ALLEY OFF O' 97TH STREET. NOW MAYBE SHE WAS STALKIN' 'EM OR MAYBE SHE JUST HEARD THE SCUFFLE... I DON'T KNOW.
WHATEVER THE CAUSE, SHE WAS THERE, JUMPIN' OUTTA THE SHADOWS RIGHT AT A PAIR O' WHAT LOOKED LIKE YER STAN-DARD SLIME-BUCKET MUGGERS.
YEAH. HER-- PATSY WALKER. YOU KNOW, THE
Hellcat!
ENCOUNTER IN THE ALLEY OF DEATH

SHE DIDN'T MAKE A SOUND TILL SHE LANDED RIGHT ON THIS CREEP'S BACK AND SLAMMED HIM TO THE GROUND. I KNOW HE CRACKED A MOUTH FULLA TEETH!
SPIT! SHE'S ONE OF THOSE SUPER-CLOWNS. DON'T MESS WITH HER!
WUMP
LET GO OF ME! LET GO!
THE FIRST PUNK WAS OUT. HELL-CAT STALKED THE OTHER ONE LIKE HER NAME-SAKE.
IF I GET GRABBED, IT'S YOUR FAULT! TASTE THIS, LADY BLUE!
BLAM
I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE SCREAMED. THE ONLY SOUND WAS THAT GUNFIRE!
SUDDENLY THE HEROINE'S PRIORITIES GOT CHANGED. SHE COULDN'T CHASE AFTER THE PUNKS WITH THE WOMAN BLEEDIN' LIKE THAT.
SHE WON'T FOLLOW--?!
NAH! SHE'S TOO BUSY NOW...
IT WAS OVER FER THE WOMAN. BUT KNOWIN' HOW THESE SUPER PEOPLE THINK IS NO TRICK. THEY'RE JUST LOGICAL, Y'KNOW?
SHE STARTED SEARCH-IN' THE OLD WOMAN'S BAG... FER CLUES 'N STUFF, Y'KNOW?
SHE STOPPED WHEN SHE FOUND THAT BADGE AND THAT RECEIVER.
I'M SURE IT WAS THEN THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD WHY THE PUNK HAD CALLED THE OLD WOMAN "LADY BLUE" ...SHE HAD REALLY BEEN AN UNDERCOVER COP --AND THOSE KILLERS KNEW IT!
NYPD
LOST

FREEZE!
POLICE
THE NEXT THING SHE KNEW, HELLCAT FOUND BOTH ENDS O' THE ALLEY FILLED WITH COPS. THEY DIDN'T ASK ONE QUESTION. THEY JUST YELLED AN ORDER...


NOW SHE DID EXACTLY WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE. SHE LEFT, 'CAUSE SHE KNEW THOSE BLUE BOYS WERE GONNA LET THEIR .38'S...UM... INTERRO-GATE, Y'KNOW!
POLICE

SO HELLCAT KNOWS THAT STREET PUNKS LIKE THOSE WON'T OFF NO POLICE OFFICER 'LESS THEY'RE PROTECTED. THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY, SHE FIGURED, WORKIN' FER SOMEONE ELSE.

THE BEST WAY TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS IS TO TRACK DOWN WHERE THAT RECEIVER SIGNAL SHE FOUND IN THE BAG WAS LEADIN'.
THE LADY COP HAD BUGGED SOME-ONE, AND HELLCAT WAS GONNA FIND OUT WHO AND WHERE THEY WERE.

BEFORE THOSE COPS EVEN THOUGHT TO USE THE FIRE ESCAPE LADDERS TO COME AFTER HER, HELLCAT WAS GONE. SHE MOVED LIKE FLOWIN' MILK, Y'KNOW!

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR THAT RECEIVER—OR [redacted] --TO LEAD HER TO THE PHARMACEUTICAL LAB THAT SHE KNEW WAS SUPPOSED TO BE CLOSED FER THE NIGHT.
THEN SHE SAW 'EM. THE STREET PEOPLE.
THEY GOT NAMES, BUT FOLKS JUST CALL 'EM THAT... OR THEY CALL 'EM THE HOMELESS... AND THERE ARE SOME OTHER FANCY NAMES FER 'EM, TOO. ME, I JUST CALL [redacted] PEOPLE.
HELLCAT KNEW THEY WERE ACTIN' WEIRD... Y'KNOW ...LIKE ZOMBIES FROM ONE O' THEM OLD [redacted] PICTURES.
I DON'T THINK IT TOOK HER MORE THAN A SECOND TO [redacted] SOMETHIN' WASN'T TICKIN' RIGHT.
FROM WHERE I WAS, I COULD SEE HER. BUT I DIDN'T TAKE NO NOTICE AT THE TIME.
[redacted] THAT DR. BARTLEY IMBECILE. AND, Y'KNOW, HE SHOULD HAVE 'CAUSE HE WAS THE BOSS, AFTER ALL.
LIKE THE CAT SHE IS, SHE SCAMPERED INTO THE LAB THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT.
HELLCAT DIDN'T HAVE NO KINDA INKLIN' WHAT WAS COMIN' DOWN HERE... BUT SHE FIGURED IF SHE LISTENED FER A TIME WITHOUT BEIN' SEEN, SHE'D LEARN SOON ENOUGH.

SHE CREPT ACROSS THE CATWALK --KINDA APPROPRIATE IF YA KNOW WHAT I MEAN... AND SHE HEARD BARTLEY TALKIN' TO THOSE TWO KILLIN' CREEPS...
SLOPPY, GUYS, SLOPPY, BUT NOT TO WORRY. I KNEW THIS RACKET COULDN'T GO ON FOREVER. MY BOSSES DURING THE DAY JUST THINK OF ME AS ONE OF THEIR RESEARCH PHARMACEUTICAL LAB WORKERS.
THEY HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST THAT I'VE BEEN USING THE FACILITIES AT NIGHT FOR CREATING A PROFITABLE VARIETY OF STREET DRUGS.
WE'VE BEEN DEALIN' GOOD, DOC, BUT WHEN THAT OLD LADY STARTED FIGHTIN' BACK WHEN WE TRIED TO DRUG HER, I CHECKED HER BAG-- AND SHE WAS A COP, MAN, A COP!
WELL, WE'LL HAVE TO CUT AND RUN.
ONCE YOU HYPE THESE SLIMY BAG PEOPLE UP ON OUR SPECIAL DRUGS, THEY'LL WORK THE PRODUCTION LINE UNTIL THEY BURN OUT--LIKE ZOMBIES.
WHEN WE CLOSE DOWN BEFORE DAYBREAK, JUST DUMP THEM IN THE GARBAGE LIKE THE REST: NO WITNESSES... NO ONE KNOWS A THING!
AND THAT'S WHEN--IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME--ALL HELLCAT BROKE LOOSE!
SOMEONE KNOWS, YOU REPUGNANT PIG!
KRAK
THEY TALK LIKE THAT SOMETIMES, Y'KNOW ...WHEN THEY'RE REAL ANGRY.
THE KILLER WAS IN SHOCK... HE STEPPED BACK AND HELLCAT LEANED INTO THE OTHER BUCKER.
OW!
KRAK
SHOOT HER, MOE! SHOOT HER QUICK!

YOU'VE SHOT ENOUGH PEOPLE TONIGHT, GUTLESS!
WHUD
UHUFFGH!
OKAY, STOPY THIS MIKE'S WHAT I GIVE THOSE ZOMBIES DOWN THERE THEIR ORDERS WITH.
THEIR WILL POWER'S DRUGGED OUT OF THEM, STOP WHERE YOU ARE OR ONE WORD FROM ME AND THEY'LL TAKE A COMMUNITY SWIM IN THOSE BOILING VATS.
THAT'S BETTER. MOE SAID YOU CARED ABOUT THAT STREET SCUM.
TIE HER TIGHT, BOYS, THESE COSTUMED FREAKS ARE ALL REGULAR HOUDINIS!
OKAY, YOU PEOPLE DOWN THERE, WRAP IT UP. WE'RE CLOSING DOWN SHOP--FOR GOOD!
TOO BAD, LADY, IT LOOKS AS IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE VICTIM OF A [illegible] ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE STREET SLIME DOWN THERE.
NOW ALL THE TIME BARTLEY WAS YAKKIN', THE HELLCAT WAS LOOKIN' AROUND AND THINKIN' HER WAY OUTTA THIS FIX—IF YOU'LL EXCUSE THE EXPRESSION.
SHE HAD SNEAKED A BOOK O' MATCHES FROM THE TRASH-- MADE SURE NO ONE WAS LOOKIN' AT HER AND...
TKK

FWT
FWT
FWOOSH
NO! SHE SET OFF THE SPRINKLER SYSTEM... THE INTER-COM'S SHORTED OUT, THE B—
—KILL HER! STOP HER!
KROW KROW KROW KROW
PING!
MAYBE IT WAS THE SQUAWK O' THAT SHORTED-OUT MICRO-PHONE OR MAYBE IT WAS THE COMMOTION, I DON'T KNOW ...WHATEVER IT WAS, THE STREET PEOPLE WERE ALL SHAKEN OUT O' THEIR DRUG DAZE.
RUN! HEAD FOR THE DOOR! THESE DRUGS ARE GOING TO BRING THIS PLACE DOWN!
SPLOOSH
THEY NEVER FOUND OUT EXACTLY WHAT WAS IN THEM VATS... BUT IT SURE DID A NUMBER ON THAT OLD BUILDIN'.
IT DIDN'T MATTER TO HELLCAT... ALL SHE WAS WORRIED ABOUT WAS GETTIN' EVERYONE TO SAFETY.
FWOO
NOW I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS THE FIRE, OR HELLCAT OR THAT LITTLE OLD RECEIVER THAT WAS STILL WORKIN' BUT SOMETHIN' CALLED SOME-ONE... 'CAUSE THEY WERE WAITIN' OUTSIDE.

FREEZE! AND THIS TIME THERE'S NO FIRE ESCAPE!
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE, OFFICER. YOU'RE JUST IN TIME TO SEE THE END OF A MAJOR DRUG FACTORY RUN BY FORCED SLAVE LABOR.
WE GIVE! WE GIVE! DON'T SHOOT! DON'T SHOOT!
SHUT UP, YOU IDIOT!
THE CAT LADY'S RIGHT, OFFICER.
THAT LADY POLICEMAN...SHE HAD ME CARRY THIS SIGNAL FER HER SO SHE COULD TRACK DOWN THE CREEPS WHAT BEEN SNATCHIN' THE STREET PEOPLE...THEY DID HER IN, Y'KNOW?
BUT THIS LITTLE HELLCAT TOOK UP THE TRAIL 'N SAVED US ALL, I'LL TESTIFY TO THAT, FER CERTAIN!
THANK YOU, MA'AM, WE CAN USE YOUR--HEY! WHERE'S SHE GOING?
BACK WHERE SHE CAME FROM. HER WORK'S ALL DONE.
SHE AIN'T JUST ONE O' THEM SUPER GALS NO MORE ...NOW SHE'S ONE O' US... ONE O' THE PEOPLE.
AND ME...HOW'D I KNOW ALL O' THE DETAILS? WELL, LIKE I SAID IN THE BEGINNIN'...WE ALL GOT OUR SECRETS!
THE END.

MARVEL® READERS PRESENT

Dear Presenters,

Concerning issue #27, the American Eagle was a solid enough story even if the plot was predictable. The main thing was the variety offered by the American Eagle's presence in this issue.

Havok, the lead feature, leaves me feeling a bit down, the art is superb but the thought of Havok risking life and limb over someone he knows so little about seems a bit far fetched.

The Black Panther story continues to hold me enthralled after 15 installments. You have to tell me, will the Panther be getting his own series when the current storyline finishes?

Coldblood is probably the best premiere series to hit this title. I had forgotten how much I have missed the team of Moench and Gulacy from their stint on the original Master of Kung Fu series way back when. Part two was enjoyable to my senses and it also served to dispel all my fears of a rip-off of the Deathlock series from years past.

I am still looking for the right mix that will give this title a true anthology feel. Be bold, run a few issues without a mutant title, lead off with a Two Gun Kid western or a Dracula/ horror melodrama experiment!

Before I go I just had to ask, since all of the popular monthly titles are biweekly for the summer will MCP go weekly?

Charles S. Novinskie
P.O. Box 1323
Grand Junction, CO 81502

Bite your tongue, Charles, and don't let Tom DeFalco hear you! We don't think any editor could handle a weekly schedule. Oh, except maybe the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE's second best editor in comics today, Marvel's own Bob Harras. Now, some people say that the only reason he was chosen is because he's the editor of Marvel's most popular book, THE X-MEN. But we know the truth, it's because of his hard work and positive attitude! Take a bow, Bob, you really deserve it! (Yeah, right, sure he gets it! Not an office that does *real* work like us. Boy, some people get all the breaks. . .oh, er, guess we lost our heads, no offense, Bob?!?) Um, now on to the next letter, see you soon, Charles. . .

Dear Sirs,

I really enjoy MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, but I think you're overusing the mutants. I think you should alternate the logo. For example, instead of saying MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS THE X-MEN'S HAVOK, you should say MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS COLDBLOOD, or BLACK PANTHER. Anyway, I think it's good to have three ongoing series and a one-shot. The three ongoing series keep the continuity, and make people (like me) keep on buying the book. One shots are also good to get lesser characters up there in the spotlight again. Keep up the good work.

Now, I have a few character suggestions: First, Firestar is my absolute favorite, but unused, character. I loved the few stories she's had in the past, and I'd really love to see her in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS. I also think you should do a Spider-Woman story. I loved her in the Freedom Force, and think she'd make an excellent ongoing series here. Hey, how about Dagger, you've already had a Cloak story! What about a Paladin ongoing series written by Scott Lobdell? Please? How about a Black Cat story? I miss her! Please have a Freedom Force series too! They could almost be considered heroes. Finally, why don't you do a series on a Marvel villain. Villains are people too, you know!

Thank you for your time, and please consider my suggestions.

Jeff Hill
Lakeview, OR

AAAAAAHHHHHHH!! We mean we'll try to, we mean we're going to, um, yeah, you'll see a lot of that stuff soon. . .

Dear Marvel,

After a year of MCP, it's high time I wrote. Overall, I've been pleased and also displeased. The biweekly schedule is just fine for this book. (The summertime biweekliness of some of your other titles rubs me wrong, though, especially for one particular fellow with *three* titles already!) The eight page length is good only for perfectly paced stories, such as the current Black Panther epic. For most of the serials it is just too choppy, and for the one-parters, it's entirely too short. I strongly suggest cutting back to just three features, though I realize that three into thirty-two doesn't go.

As for the stories themselves, the X-Men serials have all been okay. The Wolverine story was enjoyable. Everything felt right and fit Logan well. Besides, John Buscema has been my favorite for years. Nocenti's Colossus suffered both the virtues and vices characteristic of her writing. She tells a tale wonderfully, with feeling and often with insight. However, her characters routinely mouth Nocenti's opinions rather than their own. Not much to be said of the Cyclops yarn, though I enjoyed seeing the twisted, ends-motivated morality of Master Mold pushed to its extreme. Too many persons hold to such pragmatic, or else to utilitarian moral standards, and they never see that true morality is deontological. It's too early to comment on the Havok story.

The other serials have been uniformly good. The realism of Shang-Chi brought back memories. Perhaps a revival is in order for that defunct title? Gerber's Man-Thing was done as only he can do it: excellently. But it was too tied up in recent political events for my taste. "Panther's Quest"—what can I say? This is so good. In contrast to the moralism of Nocenti, McGregor lets the story the story draw its own moral. We see a complex story sympathetically treated through the eyes of all involved, both the "heroes" and the "villains". We are less quick to self-righteous condemnation, more apt to weep at the human condition; that of tragic existential reality. Mr. McGregor is to be commended, not to forget Gene Colan, another of my old favorites.

The shorter stories are usually forgotten with the turn of the page, except the Dr. Strange two-parter. Excellent, in some ways more so than the Panther story. *The* Sorcerer Supreme intervening for the sake of one man and his family. Comics *can* set a wholesome example.

Patrick Guthrie
3118 Sassafras
Fayetteville, AR 72703

Very true, Patrick, thanks for your comments.

Dear Marvel Readers Present:

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #28—

Havok—good story and art. Really interesting. I hope Plasma isn't really Leila. That would be a problem.

Black Panther—Good story, decent art. Very interesting. It's too bad the kid had to die. But then there are always innocents caught in the midst of wars.

Coldblood—Great story, good art. I really like it. And now that he has some information about his past, maybe we'll get to know more about him and Gina.

Triton—Decent story, good art. The last panel was good. Roxxon strikes again. I wonder how many containers like that are in the Earth's oceans. Some real interesting stories could come out of that.

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #29—

Twenty-nine issues after he started off this comic, Wolverine is back. Great! And he is with Havok! Sort of like the MELTDOWN gig, only not so much intrigue.

The story was really good as was the art. I can't wait to see Havok and Wolverine working together next issue. It should be great!

This Black Panther story is really dragging along. A lot has happened, but it has had a great many gap issues, such as this issue and some of the last. It still isn't bad though.

Coldblood is getting better and better. Now he is in Las Vegas fighting a pursuit robot. Hopefully he'll access his memories soon.

The Quasar story was pretty good. I enjoyed seeing Jennifer Kale again. I'd like to see her get a multi-issue story in this book sometime in the future.

Shane Hutchison
2710 Jamestown
Dickinson, TX 77539

Thanks for all of your comments, Shane. We know for a fact that there are no plans for a Jennifer Kale saga in the future. But now, with this new found support, maybe there can be one! Only time will tell. . .

HELLCAT
FIGHTS FOR THE HOMELESS!
BS. 89
BLACK PANTHER
DOUBLE-SIZED BATTLE CHAPTER!